

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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R 281423Z OCT 76
FM AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7252
INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
USMISSION BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMMBASSY SOFIA 1854
AMMBASSY WARSAW 2270

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, PROP, HU
SUBJ: SEMI-ANNUAL REPORTS ON RFE BROADCASTS TO HUNGARY

REF: STATE 51717, BUDAPEST 1072

1. SUMMARY: EMBASSY CONTINUES TO BVALUE RFE BROADCASTS AS

SOURCE OF SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION ON OUTSIDE WORLD FOR
HUNGARIAN LISTENERS AND AS SPUR TO HUNGARIAN MEDIA TO PROVIDE
MORE COMPREHENSIVE AND LESS DISTORTED COVERAGE OF WORLD EVENTS.
CROSS-REPORTING ON EAST EUROPE AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL COVERAGE
REMAINS EXCELLENT. WE BELIEVE HUNGARIAN STAFF EFFORTS TO
REDUCE CARPING, ELIMINATE POLEMICS, AND GET AWAY FROM
EXCLUSIVELY NEGATIVE APPROACH TO DOMESTIC HUNGARIAN POLITICS
HAS RESULTED IN IMPROVED TONE OF BROADCASTS. HOWEVER,
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SOME LAPSES PERSIST AND EFFECTIVENESS OF PROGRAMMING ON

INTERNAL MATTERS MAY BE FURTHER IMPROVED. EMBASSY WELCOMES REDUCED EMPHASIS ON COVERAGE OF INTERNAL POLITICAL EVENTS AND LIBERAL USE OF TECHNIQUE OF DISSEMINATING TO WIDER AUDIENCE REVEALING COMMENTARY IN SPECIALIZED AND ELITE-TARGETED HUNGARIAN PUBLICATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. FOLLOWING ASSESSMENT IS BASED ON HUNGARIAN BROADCAST ANALYSES AND SELECTED PROGRAM SCRIPTS PROVIDED BY AMCONSUL MUNICH COVERING PERIOD AUGUST TO MID-OCTOBER 1976. ON BASIS EXAMINATION THESE MATERIALS EMBASSY, EXCEPT AS NOTED BELOW, FINDS EVALUATION IT SUBMITTED IN LAST SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT ON RFE OUTPUT STILL VALID. RFE STILL HAS TOUGH COMPETITION FROM OTHER WESTERN AND HUNGARIAN MEDIA SOURCES. IT IS STILL SPUR TO HUNGARIAN MEDIA TO GREATER OBJECTIVITY. RECEPTION RFE PROGRAMS STILL GOOD. HUNGARIAN GOVERNMENT AND MEDIA STILL SELDOM REFER TO RFE; EMBASSY CONTACTS DO NOT BRING UP THE RADIO IN CONVERSATION.

3. IN EMBASSY'S VIEW THERE HAS BEEN A CHANGE FOR THE BETTER IN RECENT MONTHS WITH REGARD TO BROADCASTS RELATING TO THE INTERNAL HUNGARIAN POLITICAL SCENE. POLEMICS, LECTURING AND MORALIZING ARE ONLY OCCASIONALLY FOUND AND, WHEN THEY ARE, THEY ARE LESS BLATANT. YET THEY STILL REMAIN IN IMPORTANT NUMBER AND NEED TO BE EXORCISED. AUGUST 29 ARTICLE ON USE OF MEANINGLESS TERMS, FOR EXAMPLE, TALKS ABOUT THE SO-CALLED SOCIALIST SYSTEM, SELF-STYLED LEADERS, AND INABILITY OF THE REGIME TO COPE WITH SIMPLEST MATTERS OF LIFE. THIS ARTICLE NOT SO MUCH INACCURATE AS GRATUITOUS. HUNGARIAN PUBLIC FULLY CAPABLE OF APPLYING OWN EPITHETS TO REGIME, EVALUATING SIGNIFICANCE OF SHORTAGES OF CONSUMER GOODS, AND IN PERCEIVING VACUITY OF OFFICIAL PRESS WITHOUT ASSISTANCE OF RFE. IT WOULD BE MORE EFFECTIVE IN OUR VIEW NOT TO RIDICULE BUT LET FACTS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES AND TO OFFER CONSTRUCTIVE COMPARISONS AND ADVICE. FOR EXAMPLE, AUGUST 21 BROADCAST ON EXCHANGE OF PARTY MEMBERSHIP CARDS MAKES CRITICAL POINTS IN MORE OBJECTIVE MANNER AND THE SEPTEMBER 4 AND AUGUST 16 ARTICLES ON LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TRADE UNIONS AND WORKER MORALE ARE NOT AFRAID TO GIVE REGIME MODICUM OF CREDIT FOR LEAVING BEHIND STALINIST ERA WHILE MAKING INDIRECTLY MORE IMPORTANT CRITICAL POINTS ABOUT WHERE FURTHER PROGRESS NEEDS TO BE MADE TO PROVIDE MORE MEANINGFUL ROLE FOR WORKERS. IN SUM, SUBSTANCE OF RFE PROGRAMS IS NOT PROBLEM. TONE IS. CONTINUED AND SLIGHTLY MORE RIGOROUS EDITING TO ELIMINATE WORDS LIKE SO-CALLED, FARCIAL, SELF-APPOINTED,

SHOCKING, AND BITTER, WHICH ARE USED TOO LAVISHLY, WOULD HELP TOWARD A SOLUTION. (WE NOTED ONLY ONE REFERENCE TO HUNGARY AS "OUR COUNTRY" BY ANNOUNCER WHICH IS DISTINCT ADVANCE.)

4. LARGER PROBLEM ON WHICH WE ALSO NOTE PROGRESS IS NEED TO GET AWAY FROM UNIFORMLY NEGATIVE APPROACH. TRADE UNION PROGRAMS CITED ABOVE WERE GOOD STEP IN THIS DIRECTION. AUGUST 15 PROGRAM, NOTING USE OF PUBLIC OPINION POLLS IN HUNGARY AS POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT BUT DECRYING ITS RESTRICTION TO NON-POLITICAL MATTERS, WAS ANOTHER GOOD EFFORT IN THIS DIRECTION. SIMILARLY, AUGUST 28 COMMENTARY ON PEOPLE'S PATRIOTIC FRONT OBJECTIVELY CRITICIZED THAT INSTITUTION'S PRETENSIONS TO ENHANCING POLITICAL DEMOCRACY WHILE AT SAME TIME NOTING BENIGN ASPECTS OF FRONT'S SOCIAL ACTIVITIES -- ALTHOUGH RFE COULD HAVE, MORE EFFECTIVELY, REFRAINED FROM MORALIZING IN ARTICLE'S CONCLUDING SENTENCE. FINALLY, WE BELIEVE RFE SPENDS TOO MUCH TIME NOTING SUCH THINGS AS POOR QUALITY OF HUNGARIAN SHOES (OCTOBER 4), SHORTAGE OF BEER (OCTOBER 1), AND DEFICIENCIES IN HUNGARIAN WINE-GROWING (OCTOBER 5). SUCH CONSTANT FAULT-FINDING WE FIND PETTY AND POINTLESS. MORE TO MARK WOULD BE COMPARISONS OF NATIONAL GROWTH RATES AND LEVELS OF DEVELOPMENT WITH THOSE OF FREE NATIONS OR BROADCAST MAKING MORE GENERAL POINT IN OBJECTIVE MANNER LIKE ONE CONCERNING SOVIET CRITICISM OF QUALITY OF HUNGARIAN EXPORT GOODS (OCTOBER 7).

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FM AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7253
INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
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5. EMBASSY RECOGNIZES DIFFICULTY IN TRYING TO CARRY OUT FUNCTION OF DEMONSTRATING SUPERIORITY OF MORE DEMOCRATIC WESTERN ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SYSTEM BUT BELIEVES THIS CAN BE DONE MOST EFFECTIVELY IF IT IS DONE PRIMARILY IN A CONSTRUCTIVE MANNER AND BY CALLING ATTENTION TO ADVANCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN WEST. WE THUS APPROVE OF RFE'S POLICY OF LIMITING BROADCASTING ON INTERNAL HUNGARIAN POLITICAL MATTERS TO 16 PERCENT OF PROGRAMMING, OF LIBERAL USE OF QUOTING OF HUNGARIAN PERIODICALS ON SENSITIVE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES, AND OF DISSEMINATING SUCH INFORMATION BEYOND ELITE TO WIDER HUNGARIAN AUDIENCE THROUGH MEANS OF RFE BROADCASTS. IN THIS CONNECTION WE ALSO COMMEND RFE FOR ITS CROSS-REPORTING ON EVENTS IN POLAND AND ON EUROCOMMUNISM AND ON ITS EXCELLENT COVERAGE OF OTHER INTERNATIONAL EVENTS.

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6. WE HAVE DWELT AT LENGTH ON THE PROBLEMS OF TONE AND NEGATIVISM BECAUSE WE BELIEVE THEY SERIOUSLY AFFECT THE RADIO'S CREDIBILITY AND HENCE THE SIZE OF ITS AUDIENCE IN HUNGARY, BUT ALSO BECAUSE IT IS DIFFICULT TO MADE THESE POINTS, GIVING EXAMPLES, IN A BRIEF SPACE. THE EMBASSY NEVERTHELESS STILL BELIEVES THAT RFE PLAYS A NECESSARY AND IMPORTANT ROLE IN INFORMING THE HUNGARIAN PEOPLE AND PRESSURING HUNGARIAN MEDIA INTO GREATER HONESTY IN REPORTING. AS MORE HUNGARIANS TRAVEL ABROAD OR ARE EXPOSED TO WESTERN RADIO, TV AND PUBLICATIONS IN INCREASING AMOUNTS, RFE HAS DONE A GOOD JOB IN ADAPTING ITS PROGRAMMING TO APPEAL TO AN EVER MORE SOPHISTICATED AND EVER "LESS INFORMATION-STARVED" AUDIENCE. WE HOPE OUR COMMENTS ABOVE WILL BE OF SOME ASSISTANCE TO THEM IN CONTINUING THIS PROCESS.
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